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vironment, or in the actual determination, from moment to moment, of any of the content of reality. That man is a real agent—and that the distinctive quality of his agency consists in the part played therein by the imaginative recovery and analysis of a physically non-existent past and the imaginative prevision of a physically non-existent future—these are the first articles of any consistently pragmatic creed. Such a creed is simply a return to sanity; for these two theses are the common and constant presuppositions of the entire business of life. Never, surely, did a sillier or more self-stultifying idea enter the human mind, than the idea that thinking as such—that is to say, remembering, planning, reasoning, forecasting—is a vast irrelevancy, having no part in the causation of man's behavior or in the shaping of his fortunes—a mysterious redundancy in a cosmos which would follow precisely the same course without it. Nobody at a moment of reflective action, it may be suspected, ever believed this to be true; and even the composing and publishing of arguments for parallelism is a kind of reflective action.

If, however, this account of the true implications and chief significance of contemporary pragmatism is correct, that philosophy has before it certain unfulfilled tasks—the task of a more serious and thorough examination of the psychophysical problem than it has yet given us, and of the formulation of a philosophy of nature and of the evolutionary process which shall be in keeping with the two fundamental pragmatic principles.

ARTHUR O. LOVEJOY.

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.

THE NATURE OF ESTHETIC OBJECTIVITY

THERE has been much debate as to whether esthetic values are objective and absolute or subjective and relative. The former view would give a rigid guide to taste and criticism. It is, however, subject to two difficulties: (*a*) theorists can not agree as to what the objective norms are; (*b*) when they try to account for the variations of actual taste among individuals and among nations, they are forced to admit that judgments of taste which seem, to those who make them, objective and absolute are in fact modified by subjective factors; indeed the alleged objective factor is so overlaid with convention, prejudice, and accident that it ceases to be empirically traceable.

Conversely the subjective and relative theory accounts for the variety of actual taste, but it renders unintelligible our attempts to

"improve" and "correct" the taste of others and indeed of ourselves. We do not ordinarily seek to convert the man who prefers fishing to hunting or raspberries to strawberries. But we do spend a great deal of energy in trying to spread a taste for "the best" in music, in literature, in house furnishing, *etc.* To a thorough and clear-sighted relativist such an effort must appear altogether misguided; he can attribute it only to a tyrannical tendency in human nature which seeks to impose its own tastes on others and will not tolerate difference.

Now it is, alas, true that human nature has this unlovely propensity, which often makes itself felt in the esthetic sphere. We often find a fanatic engaged in the paradoxical propaganda of spreading his own narrowness. (See Tolstoi in *What is Art?* for moralistic narrowness, and the vers librist's anathemas on rhyme and meter for formal narrowness.) This propensity extends even to those points most often admitted to be subjective. We sometimes encounter a bore who is offended by our rejection of cucumbers or bridge and tries to open our hearts to their charms. But the best teachers of art and literature are not of that type: their temperament is far removed from fanatical intolerance. They have not a brutal desire to modify their pupils' taste because it differs from their own, but they feel that in every man's nature there is a potential demand for "the best" which needs to be crystallized into an actual demand. Their attitude is not expressed by saying, "I like Shakespeare and you don't; now I am going to compel you to like him," but rather, "Your nature needs the breadth and depth and exhilaration which Shakespeare can give you; let me smooth out the difficulties that hamper your responsiveness to him, and you will be the gainer." One who lays stress on the effort to cultivate a taste for the best may easily be led to the view that absolute esthetic values are "pre-supposed," otherwise every taste should be left to its own devices.

Evidently some synthesis is needed. This may be achieved by considering the objectivity of esthetic values as potential rather than actual, a problem rather than a datum, an aspiration toward unity and richness, rather than the possession of a rigid yardstick of value. This aspiration reveals itself in the process of convergence and enrichment of developing tastes, not in an extant uniformity of tastes. The following paragraphs are an attempt to amplify and justify this view of esthetic objectivity.

One factor tending toward uniformity is the share-demanding or appropriative tendency. Desiring to enjoy fullness of life, we desire to enjoy what we see others enjoy. Were this tendency not modified by others it would level down as well as up; it would not

only make the musical novice aspire to appreciate Beethoven, but it would make the esthete yearn for the joys of the merry-go-round. This would tend to uniformity by an indiscriminate and reciprocal fusion of tastes, like a mixture of liquids. But this sharing tendency is in fact modified by a leveling-up tendency which may be called aristocratic. We prefer some types of life to others; especially we prefer the type of life we suppose to be led by our superiors in endowment, experience, and opportunity. We desire to enjoy what the superior man enjoys, as a means of becoming superior and as the reward and seal of superiority. We are capable of an experience superior in wealth and subtlety to what we actually enjoy; we seek those esthetic experiences which we hope will actualize that potentiality. The novice in any art is convinced that the master has a richer experience of that art than he, and he is willing to make sacrifices and submit to guidance in order to attain mastery. He is willing to practise Bach fugues and to study "values" in landscape, hoping that they will eventually evoke an appreciative response in him.

The best in esthetic experience is what is preferred by those who have the richest experience and the subtlest discrimination in that field. In the neighboring field of ethics Aristotle's criterion was the judgment of the temperate and sagacious man (*ὁ φρόνιμος*).¹ There seems to be a circle in making the wise man's decision the standard of wisdom; yet in no other way can a standard be made concrete. Similarly in esthetics, the true values are those imputed by the cultivated man. But we can avoid the circle, since we need not define the cultivated man as one who has the sense of true values; we may define him more significantly as the man who has harmoniously and richly developed his powers of appreciation and discrimination.

The preferences of the cultivated man are valid for his inferiors because they have similar powers in potential form and desire to develop them. This validity does not mean that his preferences are to be externally accepted and parroted, but that they should be inwardly relived. Nevertheless criticism of art and literature should avoid being dogmatic, because no man is fully cultivated. The critic should not pretend to fulminate infallible decrees. On the other hand he falls short of his task if he is content to give us only "the adventures of his soul" as a purely subjective record. Let him judge, not as he momentarily feels, but as he aspires to feel, striving toward ever higher objectivity.

The authority of tradition rests on the likelihood that the con-

¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2, ch. 6, sect. 15; cf. J. A. Stewart's note on the passage.

sensus of apparently cultivated persons throughout many generations will approximately represent humanity at its best and therefore be approximately objective. That authority is limited by the following facts: some legitimate human interests have been late in finding a voice—such are the interests in landscape and in childhood; it is possible therefore that other interests have not yet found adequate esthetic expression; at any rate this should not be precluded by a slavish adherence to tradition. Likewise some media of expression have been late in developing; music as we know it is almost wholly a product of the last two centuries and it would be folly to judge it by the canons of Greek or medieval music. The verdict of tradition, like that of the individual critic, should be relived not parroted. It may be transcended when the new verdict can be shown to rest on a richer, more harmonious, and more discriminating experience than that which formed the basis of the tradition.

To our doctrine that we all desire to enjoy what the most cultivated enjoy, the objection may be made that street boys do not in fact desire to appreciate Beethoven or Botticelli. But this merely means that you can not go up stairs five steps at a time. The street boy is eagerly reaching out for novel and richer enjoyments, only his esthetic experience is so meager that his outreachings are ill-directed. Nevertheless the path is open from the movies through the best-selling novels to Kipling, Stevenson, and beyond; the path is open from jazz music through comic opera and operetta to Verdi, Wagner, and the greatest music. The path is open, but the individual may not see far along it.

The situation as I see it may be summarized as follows. The subjectivists are right in denying that we are natively endowed with an identical taste, and in demanding that our taste should always be our genuine preference, not a conventional echo. The objectivists are right in maintaining that some standards of taste are really better than others, and in urging that we should respect tradition and work for a convergence of tastes. The ideal standard, however is not to be found by looking downward or backward, but forward into the richest and most harmonious forms of possible experience. The judgments of individuals have a degree of objective validity proportional to the wealth and harmony of the experience on which they are based.

ALBERT R. CHANDLER.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY.